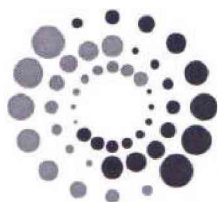


RELIGION, CULTURE, SOCIETY

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for the Study of Religious Culture

Edited by
Gábor BARNA and Orsolya GYÖNGYÖSSY



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"WHO PLACED THE JEWS IN THE BOURGEOIS STRATUM OF THE STATE"

LOYALTIES, DISCOURSES AND WORLD-VIEWS IN HUNGARIAN JEWISH SYMBOLIC POLITICS BEFORE 1944¹

Abstract: The study examines the question of veneration of the king, confessionnalization and state patriotism in the Jewish denominational press before 1944 through the example of the attitude towards the ruler and the authorities of the Jewish communities interpreting themselves in the historical life-world of the diaspora. The life-worlds of the Monarchy experienced on a denominational basis fundamentally determined the experiences, possibilities for action, interpretations, discourse tradition and perspectives of their members. In the case of the Jews the ways in which denominational discourse traditions were shaped and the ways of relating to the broader social environment were influenced by the traditions of Judaism, the possibilities and limitations of the changing society, and by the appearance of modern ideals of nation.

Keywords: Habsburg, Jew, civil religion, state patriotisms, veneration of the king

"Musing on the past, what we first feel is inexpressible gratitude to Francis Joseph I and Charles IV, crowned kings of Hungary and even earlier to Joseph II, uncrowned Hungarian ruler, under whom the Jews won human and civil rights and who placed the Jews in the bourgeois stratum of the state."²

The quotation in the title appeared in 1939 in *Orthodox Zsidó Újság* [*Orthodox Jewish Newspaper*], the organ of the Budapest Orthodox Jewish denomination, in an interpretation of news of the 2nd Jewish Law. However, the strategy reflected in the news item pointed beyond the discourses of the denominational trend and also represented the discourse and symbolic politics characteristic of Neology. The continuation of the lines in the motto recalled the emblematic liberal politicians of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, who figured in the leading article as benefactors of the Jews. At the same time the reality of the Horthy era – with

1 The author is an external associate of the MTA – SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture (03 217).

2 *Orthodox Zsidó Újság*, 10 May 1939 / 1–2. Egy fővárosi falragasz előtt. [Contemplating a notice on a wall in Budapest]

its discourses in a “kuruc” spirit,³ its anti-Semitic phenomena and the symbolic gestures that the supreme governing power expected – was always present in the Hungarian Jewish denominational press and in the texts of synagogue homiletics that shaped public thinking. The gestures in the field of symbolic politics made by the Jewish press are noteworthy when seen from the angle of the history of Jewish political thinking, the question of hierarchies of loyalty, and the blending of elements of the pre-modern and modern world-views. How thin is the borderline on which the conflicting symbolic political discourses move? How are pre-modern, irrational models thinking in terms of a created world and models operating as rational organised around the modern notion of progress and natural law combined into an integral whole? What can the symbolic practices express at the level of the texts and community rites?

At the borderline between feudal and modern national social systems

The emancipation of the Jews occurred at the borderline between the feudal and the modern national social systems, and at the encounter of world-views determined by revelation and by the enlightened notion of progress. The relationship of the Jews to royal power was determined by the traditions of Judaism,⁴ while the notion of equality and becoming part of the modern European nations was based on the Jewish enlightenment.⁵ Within this frame of interpretation for example Frances Joseph, especially in the process of succession, was compared to Moses leading the Jews out of servitude, and Charles IV to Joshua leading them to the promised land and the attainment of equality.⁶ The texts revealed the essential features of these things and made use of readily understandable biblical comparisons.

Among the Jews in Hungary in the second half of the 19th century the rites of Judaism linked to feudal traditions (laudes, intrada, blessing the crowned ruler, prayer for the king) were present simultaneously with modern national symbolic politics and modes of argument. In the same way, both the rational and irrational elements in the traditions of Judaism formed by the chain of generations and the Enlightenment with its rationalism and aspirations to transform society were present in the world-view of the representatives of reforms. The ruler and state power was a power legitimised by God, and the Eternal appeared in Hungarian Jewish symbolic politics as the active shaper of His people's fate.

The parallel presence and in cases the intertwining of different models for interpretation of the world could be observed in the area of the relationship of

3 A concept that has its roots in the 17th-18th century Principality of Transylvania, that was given new relevance in the second half of the 19th century within the frames of the modern constitutional monarchy and the Hungarian national ideal. It comprised opposition to the Habsburgs, and Protestant anti-Catholicism, the latter as a symbolic criticism of the power constellation within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

4 DUBIN 2014, GLÄSSER 2016, KOMORÓCZY 2012a. 159, 332.

5 DUBIN 2005

6 GLÄSSER 2016, GLÄSSER 2017.

the community to the authorities. The power symbolism of the feudal world had its place in religious eschatologies,⁷ it translated its legitimations into the basic stories of religious memory. The Jewish self-interpretation of the secular world and its relationship to the local authorities can also be understood from the basic stories of Judaism of the secular world, in the centre of which were the interpretations of *galuth*.⁸ The Jews reinterpreted the mediaeval Jewish institution of "servant of the royal chamber" as a form of service to the king where the Jews were not servants of the king's servants but free people under the protection of the king.⁹ According to the teachings of Judaism the crowned head is a pale reflection in this world of the glory of the Creator of the World.¹⁰

Sources and practices shaping attitudes

The denominational relationship towards the supreme state power can be observed not only in homiletics with the intention of shaping attitudes and at the level of the press. It also appeared in the normative system of denominational community frames. In Csongrád for example, after a repeated case in which members of the religious community did not stand during the prayer to be said for the ruler, on 14 July 1883 the matter was discussed, and it was set down in the minutes that those present were required to stand in the synagogue during the prayer said by the cantor for king and country (*Hanoten teshua*).¹¹

Another case from the south of the Great Plain also illustrates the social influence of homiletics, inauguration speeches and symbolic political rites: the scandal and reprisal arising from the inauguration of the cemetery monument in Szeged for Jewish First World War heroes. In the anti-Semitic public discourse of the Horthy era the inauguration speech made by Dr vitéz Kálmán Shvoy on heroism independent of denomination evoked a negative press response in Budapest from the authorities and led to the forced retirement of the all-arms brigade commander.¹² Historical research is unable to empirically and representatively establish the individual perception of listeners hearing the homilies, participants in religious services or monument inauguration ceremonies, in the same way as it cannot show how readers of the denominational press interpreted its texts, but it would be over-hasty to question their influence in shaping community attitudes.

7 See: LÖWITH 1996.0

8 SINGER 1907. 17–18, 118–119.

9 DUBIN 2014. 57–58.

10 SINGER 1907. 210–211.

11 Archive of the Szeged Jewish Religious Community, Csongrád material, 1884–1920, Community minutes, taxation. Vol. 4. "Minutes No. 7", (14 July 1883) p[oint] 20. I wish to thank Péter Illés who drew my attention to the case.

12 For more details, see: GLÄSSER – GLÄSSERNÉ NAGYILLÉS 2015.

Dualities spanning historical periods

In Neolog cultural memory 1848 is the symbol of the melding together of the modern Hungarian nation. Although the symbolic politics of independence appeared in Jewish public discourse, it was not directed against Francis Joseph but was intended to express belonging to the Hungarian nation within a system of multiple loyalties. The “*kuruc*”-type national and the royalist state patriotic discourse were present side by side in the Neolog and Orthodox press throughout the period. Nevertheless, in the case of conflicting loyalties, respect for the king legitimated by religious models prevailed. Before the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 mainly religious models predominated: respect for the king and Talmudic respect for laws of the state that were not directed against the Jewish religion. This is corroborated by the example of Leopold Löw regarded as an enthusiastic supporter of the Hungarian struggle for independence and of Magyarisation: before 1859 the rabbi who called for Hungarian-language rhetoric in the synagogue published in German two of his speeches on Francis Joseph and also wrote verse in Hebrew about the ruler.¹³ It should also be mentioned here that following the assassination attempt by Libényi motivated by national sentiment for Hungarian independence, a whole series of services for the recovery of the ruler were held in synagogues, including one led by Leopold Löw, chief rabbi of Szeged.¹⁴

After the Compromise the figure of Francis Joseph was judged in the context of the question of constitutionality and the rabbis and Jewish publicists in Hungary adopted the position of the 1867 Compromise.¹⁵ With the Enlightenment and the emergence of modern political civil consciousness, Jewish synagogue speeches reflecting on major events of the majority national history and adaptations of the symbolic politics of the surrounding world within the frame of Judaism also appeared. On the name day and birthday of the ruler, and at religious services as part of the rites for anniversaries in the life of the ruling family the synagogue sermons of many rabbis reflected on similarities in Holy Scripture and in the events of the Compromise.

Jewish symbolic politics always combined different traditions. On the one hand it saw the role of the ruler and the relationship of the Jews to the ruler as part of the created world in which the Eternal appeared as an active participant in the present, the shaper of his people's fate. On the other hand, natural law, the notion of progress and the secular eschatology of seeking the betterment of society was to be found behind the public discourse on Jewish enlightenment, equal rights and belonging to the Hungarian nation.

According to historians' models of 19th century social changes, the modern individualist citizen placed himself in the centre of his world, as a result God and transcendence could be present there only as the individual's subjective, personal relationship to God and as part of the tradition behind the person. The God who

13 KOMORÓCZY 2012b. 40.

14 BÁNYAI 2017.

15 See: GLÄSSER 2016

actively imbued and explained the world was gradually forced into the background. In modern society politics took over the role of explaining and holding together the world that had been played by religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age. Atheism began to spread as a new phenomenon.¹⁶ Up to the autumn of 1918 Neolog homiletics and publicistics did not reflect these trends; if they mentioned them at all it was – similarly to Orthodox publicistics – within the frame of the problem of indifference to religion. However, this change in the world-view was clearly reflected in the transformation of power structures that followed the collapse after the First World War. Among the changes in power and in part also in personnel, the shifting frames and self-reflections, *Egyenlőség* was the first to break the social narrative determining loyalty to the king. Dr Ernő Ballagi, a lawyer who joined the staff of the paper in 1915 – and served mainly as defence lawyer for *Egyenlőség* in press cases – felt the need for historical/denominational confirmation of the change in the form of the state during the bourgeois revolution of 1918.¹⁷ For Miksa Szabolcsi – the editor-in-chief who died in 1915 – it was Francis Ferdinand's portrait that was a mobilising force in the state patriotic symbolism of the war, while for Ballagi¹⁸ who belonged to the generation socialised after reception, it was the change in the state form that represented denominational confirmation. In Ballagi's narrative the king was no longer the crowned head ruling by grace of God but had become an individual embodying supreme state power who could be directed towards a goal and influenced by groups representing corporate interests in the social space (for example, the Christian Socialists or the anti-Semites). And the non-Jewish kingdoms of the Diaspora are not part of the punishing-rewarding God's Messianistic plan for the Jews, but in the secular eschatology of the revolutions building on the ruins of the past in the name of progress, they are representatives of state forms that have lost their legitimacy that will be replaced through human will and actions by a utopistic state realised in this world in the present that will bring salvation for the whole of mankind.¹⁹ Ballagi reinterpreted the religious mission of Judaism as a secular political programme, at a time when the denomination was seeking its place in the new structure. In this way no transition or continuity can be found at the level of the determining social narratives. The only common point between the early and the new narratives was the positive memory of Francis Joseph who gave the denomination equal rights. For Ballagi the historical "negotiation" of royal power became the separation of the practice of Jewish loyalty to the king from the revolutionary present. In this way Ballagi's practice of remembrance fitted perfectly into the remembrance canons of the new elites criticising the Monarchy.²⁰

16 KAPITÁNY – KAPITÁNY 2007. 383–384.

17 *Egyenlőség* 16 November 1918 / 1–2. Zsidóság és köztársaság.[Jews and republic] [Written by: Dr. Ernő Ballagi]

18 See: SELTMANN 2000. 81.

19 See: LÖWITH 1996.

20 See: ROMSICS 2004. 58, 62–97.

A radically different practice characterised Jewish symbolic politics in Hungary in the interwar years. The period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy appeared as a positive time in the remembrance canon of both the Neolog and the Orthodox press. The person of the ruler – Francis Joseph and Charles IV – was judged similarly. The age of the two emperor-kings became a symbol in the time between the two world wars. This was clearly reflected in the Orthodox organisation's Budapest paper: by 1930 the time of Francis Joseph had become a lost golden age.²¹

The new dominant narrative in Central Europe was “national self-realisation” that led to the creation of new remembrances and new historical canons adapted to state frames. In the newly created collective historical consciousnesses memory of the dynastic past became the antithesis of the national-folk present that had won its independence. As Gergely Romsics has pointed out, positive judgement of the Dualist past characterised only the memoirs of the old elite.²² After the First World War the national strategy of the Hungarian opinion-forming elite regarding the Jews also changed. The earlier assimilative concept of nation was replaced by the ethnicist strategy. Law No. XXV of 1920 highlighted the change in the concept of nation. Because of the new frames the age of the Monarchy became a world increased in value denominationally. In the Horthy era anti-Habsburg, independence discourse shifted into the mainstream and even *Egyenlőség* was unable to escape its influence.²³ The new Hungarian elite settled the question of royal power in two laws. Law No. I of 1920 temporarily settled the question of supreme state power, and then on 1 March 1921 the national assembly elected Miklós Horthy governor. After Charles IV's two attempts to return, Law No. XLVII of 1921 declared “the termination of the rights as ruler of His Majesty Charles IV and as heir to the House of Habsburg”. However, this did not influence symbolic politics and the division of society: the debate over legitimist vs. free election of a king continued, just as an image emerged of Horthy as a traitor and usurper.²⁴ Following Charles IV's second attempt to return *Egyenlőség*, in line with the new political reality of power, interpreted the king's attempted return as an attack on the governorship as the basic institution of the new political structure and its publicists stressed the Jew loyal to the existing regime.²⁵ Rather than legitimism looking to Otto Habsburg as King Otto II, what can be seen in the Jewish press is a passive loyalty at the level of remembrance history of the institution in contrast to its present, expressed in the form of a nostalgic evocation of the past.

Together with the change in the concept of nation, the Jewish press also reacted to the conflict with the authorities of the rabbi most influential in Hungarian

21 GLÄSSER – ZIMA 2015.

22 ROMSICS 2004.

23 ZIMA 2016. 445.

24 On the image of Horthy as traitor and dethroner, see: ROMSICS 2005. 222–225.

25 See: ZIMA 2016. 450; Fiziker concludes, on the basis of the memoirs of Lajos Szabolcsi *Két emberöltő. Az Egyenlőség két évtizede (1881–1931)* [*Two Generations. Two decades of Egyenlőség (1881–1931)*] that the leading article written by Pál Sándor, Labour Party representative on the subject of the attempted return must have been removed by the censor. FIZIKER 2016. 90.

Neolog Jewish symbolic politics, the trial of Immanuel Löw for *lèse-majesté* against the governor²⁶ and his detention in house arrest. The denominational judgement of the governor can probably be seen reflected in later liturgical practice. In a study of prayer books in the successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy, Damohorská showed that the *Hanoten teshua* prayer texts were also modified after the First World War. In a number of cases the prayers said for the ruler and for the dignity of the state were either replaced by texts that did not contain concrete names or the pre-war texts were published in unchanged form with a reference to the frames of the earlier political reality that did not mention names.²⁷ The prayer books in Hungary replaced the prayer to be said for king and country with a prayer for the prosperity of the country, without reference to the governor as supreme power. For example, *Fohász [Prayer]* the prayer book for women written by Ferenc Hevesi and Simon Hevesi contained a prayer asking for wisdom and understanding in the hearts of those who handle the affairs of the country.²⁸ József Schön's *machzor* published in the Király Street printing house of Joseph Schlesinger in Budapest in 1922, in the Hebrew text for the last two days of Pesach prayed for Francis Joseph I and Amalia Eugenia. In the Hungarian translation the names had been removed.²⁹ In the wake of celebration of the king's birthday, it also became the general practice to hold spectacular celebrations for the birthday of the person representing supreme state power: prime minister or governor.³⁰ In Hungary Miklós Horthy's birth jubilees were celebrated,³¹ in Hungary the last solemn service – not on a round anniversary – was held with a prayer by Chief Rabbi Ferenc Hevesi in 1944 in the Heroes' Temple in Budapest during the time of the deportations from country towns.³²

In the Horthy era, among the rulers and statesmen held up as positive examples of Christian society, the Orthodox and Neolog view of history gave broad scope not only to the old state patriotic discourse but also to the discourse of Hungarian national independence: the tolerance of the Habsburgs, the myth of the 1848 independence struggle and the cult of Kossuth and Rákóczi were present simultaneously. Articles, feuilletons and recollections appeared with titles such

26 "Sándor Bottka, police chief of Szeged, ordered the arrest of Immanuel Löw on 20 April 1920 on suspicion of *lèse-majesté* against the governor. He was first imprisoned in the prosecution cell on the upper floor of the "palace of justice", the court building in Széchenyi Square. In early May he was transferred to the prosecution's "branch prison" in the Star Prison, then on 12 July released into house arrest in his home at Korona (since 1945 Hajnóczy) Street No. 8. Following the clemency order by Governor Miklós Horthy the house arrest was terminated on 11 June 1921." PÉTER 2004. 84; see also HIDVÉGI 1996.

27 DAMOHORSKÁ 2010. 118, 127–128.

28 HEVESI – HEVESI 1930. 543.

29 SCHÖN 1922. 512–[513].

30 See: DAMOHORSKÁ 2010. 121–123.

31 *A Magyar Zsidók Lapja* 7 March 1940 / 2. Hálaadó ünnepi istentisztelet a Kormányzó jubileumán a dohányutcai templomban. [Solemn service of thanksgiving in Dohány Street Synagogue on the Governor's jubilee.] This was adapted to the general frame, similarly to Christian prayer texts and services for the king / ruler. On Jewish occasions, see: TURBUCZ 2015. 126–127.

32 KOMORÓCZY 2012a. 890.

as *Francis Joseph I and Orthodoxy*.³³ Sándor Gábel wrote a piece recalling Francis Joseph's visit to Nagyvárad.³⁴ The aristocratic passion for collecting that also extended to antiques of Judaism acquired a hint of polemical meaning in face of present reality. This was reflected among others in the title: *From the good old world... – Hebrew poem in the library of Francis Joseph*.³⁵ These were topoi – that for the most part had already appeared in the Jewish denominational press in the period of Dualism – found on dynastic and national anniversaries and celebrations, and also in the columns of the papers with an updated message at a time when the Jews were under attack. And in the press reaction to the Jewish laws, loyalty to the dynasty and nostalgia for the monarchy again came to the fore as positive counter-examples from the national past.

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RESEARCH GROUP FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE

You have in your hands the last yearbook of the MTA-SZTE Research Group for the Study of Religious Culture. For five plus one years, that is, for six years we enjoyed the support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

As we take our leave it is worth briefly recalling our research plans and the results achieved. Our research aim can be summed up as a comparative process analysis of the changes and renewal of 19th to 21st century Hungarian religious culture (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, neo-pagan), applying methods of cultural ethnology and anthropology. The 20th century was characterised first by the intertwining of the church and state institutional systems, then by their confrontation, and finally their separation, following the changing political and ideological regimes. Secular and religious values now coexist. The institutionalised churches and the practice of religion have fallen into the background, but the demand for spirituality has not. The role of religion is important, especially in creating the historical sense of identity, but it is not the sole factor in shaping values. An interdenominational dialogue has begun between the non-Christian religions present in our society and the traditional Christian denominations. The resulting integrational/disintegrational influence is not yet a source of social conflicts in Hungary (in the Carpathian Basin), in contrast with countries further to the west, although its influence is substantial.

The case studies in this volume clearly reflect the denominational attachment, as well as the methodological diversity and many-sided approach to religious phenomena.

Gábor Barna
editor